

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Joseph R. Pitts**  
**Subcommittee on Health**  
**Field Hearing on "A Review of Efforts to Protect the**  
**Health of Jockeys and Horses in Horseracing"**  
**April 30, 2012**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

Today's hearing will look at the effects of drug use in horseracing; how it impacts the health and wellbeing of jockeys, and whether adequate rules and uniform enforcement exist to prevent doping in horseracing.

In 2008, members of the Energy and Commerce Committee held a hearing on "Breeding, Drugs, and Breakdowns: the State of Thoroughbred Horseracing and the Welfare of the Thoroughbred Racehorse." At that time, we heard testimony and promises from industry groups and state racing commissions that reform was needed and would be forthcoming.

According to a March 25, 2012, *New York Times* investigative article, "since 2009, records show, trainers at United States' tracks have been caught illegally drugging horses 3,800 times, a figure that vastly understates the problem because only a small percentage of horses are actually tested."

Further, the *New York Times* found, "Illegal doping, racing officials say, often occurs on private farms before horses are shipped to the track. Few states can legally test horses there."

Questions arise now about whether or not such rampant drug use leads to more breakdowns and injuries in horses and jockeys. And if so, what should be done about it.

We are here today, in the heart of Thoroughbred horse country in Pennsylvania, to hear firsthand from Thoroughbred owners, trainers, jockeys, veterinarians and lab experts on whether the previously promised reforms by industry have had any desired effect.

I've heard from horse owners who make sure their animals are 100 percent drug free when they race and are really bothered by what they see other people doing.

We will consider the need for a national set of uniform rules to prohibit the use of performance enhancing drugs with a set of consequential penalties for violations.

We can look at whether it is possible to create a uniform set of rules for drug use - perhaps zero tolerance - so that every state, every race, is conducted on a level playing field - which is fair to all competitors - similar to what we have in other professional sports.

Horse racing, unlike all other professional sports, adheres to no national anti-doping policy. We have been racing horses in the United States for over 200 years, but the alarming number of breakdowns and increased drug use has been a fairly recent practice.

Racing is an inherently dangerous sport. However, the increased incidences and severity of breakdowns, which has resulted in many serious jockey injuries, demands a closer look at the issue of drugs used in horse racing and how they contribute to unnecessary risk to the horse and rider.

Despite promises and assurances, state and industry groups have been unable to come together to develop uniform rules. The fact remains that there is no single entity which has the authority to impose uniform rules on racing commissions, tracks, trainers, and owners. Congress may need to step in to offer a sound national framework to protect the horses, the riders and the public.

The Interstate Horse Racing Act of 1978 was enacted by Congress to allow simulcasting rights for racetracks, so that they could expand their wagering clients. Today, that business makes up a majority of racetrack's business.

My personal view is that gambling at racetracks is a dangerous and misguided way to increase the fan base and grow interest in the sport – but that is a subject for another day.

Since 1978, Congress has continued to address public concerns about the industry and its practices. Today's hearing is being held to look at the problems associated with drug use in horse racing.

Horse doping, breakdowns, and jockey crashes are most certainly a contributing factor to the waning public interest in this sport. On the first day of Derby Week, when public attention on this beautiful sport is at its peak, is an opportune time to discuss how the industry can regain public confidence.

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